

REMARKS

Claims 1, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 11-20 remain for reconsideration. Claims 21-23 have been newly added. Claims 2, 3, 5, and 9-10 have been cancelled without prejudice.

All claims stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 6,049,602 to Foladare in view of U.S. Patent 5,884,032 to Batemen and further in view of U.S. Patent 5,721,770 to Kohler. Foladare and Bateman were relied upon by the Examiner in the previous Office Action. Kohler has been newly relied upon for teaching matching an agent skill to a caller's particular problem.

The rejections are respectfully traversed based on the following discussion.

Briefly, embodiments of the present invention are directed to providing customer service support and, more particularly, to a call back system wherein the customer does not have to wait on hold to speak to an agent (e.g., customer service representative).

As discussed in the application, many older customer call centers still in use do not have call-back or web capabilities (page 5, lines 10-15). Thus, the customer must wait on hold for the next available agent. It is very costly to

upgrade these call centers.

As shown in Figure 7, embodiments of the present invention provide a telephony server which can cost effectively provide non-call back call centers with call back capabilities without need of costly upgrades. When a customer calls for service or requests service via a web page, the customer provides a call back phone number and may specify a particular problem. The call back numbers and corresponding problems are stored in a telephony server. The telephony server then calls the call center and waits for an agent (rather than the customer waiting on hold for the agent). In addition, the server may convert information about the customer into DTMF signals which is understood by the call center prompts. When an agent answers, the agent enters his/her ID, also via DTMF, such that the telephony server recognizes the agent as available. The telephony server can then call back the customer and bridge the call between the customer and the available agent. The server may also match the available agent having expertise with a particular problem to a particular call-back request. In this manner, the agent with the appropriate skill set to solve the customer's particular problem may be selected to deal with the customer.

All claims as amended include the feature or functionality of the telephony server for detecting when an agent is available when the agent enters their DTMF identification thus providing a call back center not having call-back capabilities with call-back capabilities.

As understood, the Examiner has relied on Foladare for teaching a system wherein an agent at an agent station enters his ID using DTMF tones which are detected by a telephony server to recognize the agent.

However, this is not for the purpose of recognizing that the agent is available to speak to a customer, but rather to “authenticate” the agent (column 6, line 31). In particular, Foladare is directed to a “virtual” call center, where the agents may work from their homes or other location remote from the call center. In such system there may be security concerns that an agent may not actually be an agent. Thus Foladare appears to provide a security procedure wherein the agent must use a DTMF password to “authenticate” them on to the call center telephone system as well as a separate computer password to authenticate them on the call center’s computer network.

A remote agent using DTMF as security authentication when the agent initially reports for duty is not analogous as using a telephony server to call a call center and then wait for to receive DTMF signals back indicating that the agent is available to be bridged in a call-back to a customer.

The Examiner has additionally relied on Bateman to teach a customer service system which provides a call-back capability. However, while reading Foladare more closely, Applicant’s note that Bateman is unnecessary since Foladare actually does appear to teach a call center with call-back capabilities. Indeed, column 7, lines 50-60, teaches that when a request for call-back is

received over the web, the customer service representative (CSR) (i.e. agent) places the call back to the customer.

Thus, it is clear that Foladare's teaching of an agent entering a DTMF for "authentication" at initial log on is not analogous to using DTMF to detect that an agent is available for a call-back bridge as claimed by Applicants, since Foladare has no need to detect the availability of an agent since it is the agent that actually places the phone call back when they are ready.

The Examiner has relied on Bateman to teach a call center where the user requests a call-back at column 6, lines 1-30. However, the call center in Bateman appears to already have call-back capabilities. Indeed at column 6, line 31 it is taught that a request for help is processed by the HTTP server 46 which, as shown in Figure 1, is part of the call center. When an agent is available, the customer requesting the call-back is called. In contrast, the call center in Applicant's invention does not have call back capabilities. Therefore, a telephony server is used to call the call center and wait for an available agent. The availability of the agent being determined by detecting a DTMF ID entered when an available agent answers the phone. This is not taught or suggested by Bateman.

The newly cited reference to Kohler, has been relied upon for teaching matching an agent skill to a customer's particular problem. However, Kohler appears to queue calls for the next available agent with the appropriate skill set. Just as Foladare and Bateman discussed above, Kohler does not teach or

suggest a telephony server used to call the call center and wait for an available agent. Where, the availability of the agent is determined by detecting a DTMF ID entered when an available agent answers the phone.

Independent claim 1 recites:

“...the telephony server calling the call center;

the call center connecting the call the agent station;

entering an agent ID, by an agent at an the agent station when the agent answers the call from the telephony server, the agent ID entered yielding dual tone multi frequency (DTMF) tones encoding the agent ID corresponding to the agent;

detecting, by the telephony server, the DTMF tones resulted from the agent ID entered by the agent to detect that the agent is available; and

the telephony server calling back the user station and bridging a call back between the user station and the available agent” (emphasis added).

Similarly, independent claim 6 recites “a telephony server for receiving a request for a call-back from a user, said telephony server comprising a storage for storing phone numbers to be called back and a corresponding problem; ringing a phone for said at least one agent having expertise for said corresponding problem; answering said ringing phone and entering an agent ID, detecting that the agent is available by said agent ID; and placing the call-back from the agent to the user” (emphasis added).

Independent claim 11 recites “detect, by a telephony server, the DTMF tones resulted from the agent ID entered by the agent to determine that the agent is available” (emphasis added).

Independent claim 16 recites “the telephony server ringing a telephone at an agent station; answering the telephone; entering an agent’s ID; the telephony server decoding the agent’s ID to detect an available agent; matching the available agent to a stored problem; and the telephony server bridging a call-back from the available agent to the customer using the stored phone number corresponding to the problem” (emphasis added).

Finally, newly added claim 21 recites: “a call center to connect an incoming call to an agent telephone, the call center being without call-back capabilities;

a telephony server comprising:

a receiver for receiving a request for a call-back from a user over the internet; a dual tone multi frequency (DTMF) generator for encoding user information into DTMF commands understood by the call center; a transmitter to call the call center over the telephone network providing the DTMF commands; a DTMF detector for receiving a DTMF string entered by an agent answering the agent telephone to identify that the agent is available; and a

bridge for calling back the user to connect the available agent to the user"

(emphasis added).

The above features recited in the claims are not taught or suggested by the prior art of record. As such, it is respectfully requested that the outstanding rejections be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing, it requested that the application be reconsidered, that claims 1, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 11-23 be allowed and that the application be passed to issue. Please charge any shortages and credit any overcharges to our Deposit Account number 02-2666.

Respectfully submitted,

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